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The

Other Press

CHOPPING WOOD, CARRYING WATER SINCE 1976

Issue 25 Vol 32 May 10, 2006

STUDENT SOCIETY BUILDING

DSU DIVIDED

THE OTHER PRESS

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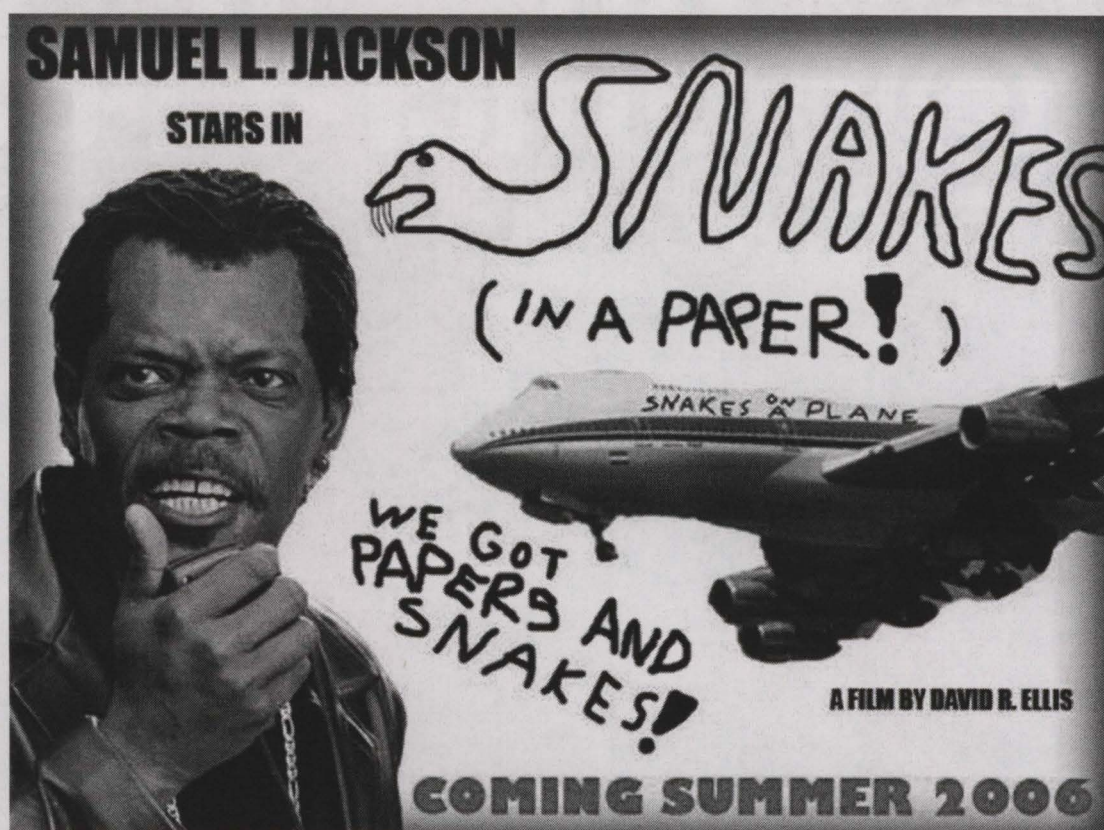
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May 10, 2006



**Congratulations to J.J. McCullough, the deserving
recipient of the prestigious OP Bowling Pulitzer. Nice
one.**

THE OP MUSIC CHARTS — Otherwise known as...
What we listened to during the creation of this issue:

CBC Radio 3—Podcast #50
CBC Radio 3—Podcast #49
Ricky Gervais Podcast Season 1—Episodes 9, 10, 11
Swervedriver—Mescal Head
Okervil River—Don't Fall In Love With Everyone You See
Heavy Trash—Self Titled.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The weekly deadline for submissions is
Wednesday for publication the following
Wednesday. Letters to the Editor, vacant sec-
tions, and "time-sensitive" articles (weekend
news, sports, and cultural reviews) will be
accepted until Saturday noon and can be sub-
mitted to the editor at: othereditor@yahoo.ca

All other submissions should be forward-
ed to the appropriate section editor. Please
include your name, phone number/email
address, and word count, and submit via
email as an MS Word.doc attachment to the
attention of the appropriate editor.

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which means all decisions are reached via a
democratic voting process. Membership in
the voting collective is open to any person
who has contributed to at least two of three
consecutive issues. Those interested in join-
ing the Other Press collective should contact
the editor at othereditor@yahoo.ca

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Dear Other Press Readers,

Do you see the look on my face? Of course you don't because I am on a plane right now, but the look is a combination of shame, humiliation, and anger.

I'm ashamed to be human right now, although I'm feeling more sub-human. I'm ashamed to be part of a race that can do so much—launch things into space, split atoms, map the genome—and yet cannot build a comfortable F'ing plane. We should all be ashamed.

I'm humiliated because I'm in a seat at the very back of the plane, and the only thing between my head and the people pooing in the bathroom is a thin wall. I'm humiliated that the lady in front of me (all of 5'2) can recline her seat and I cannot. I'm humiliated because people are lining up for the loo, and when the person coming out needs to get by the line to get back to their seat, I inevitably get an ass in my face. Oh joy.

I hate the guy next to me (we are into the anger part now) and I hope he can read this. He is big, rude, quite possibly stupid, and he needs to move his farm-boy ass over to in front of his own seat. Are my four-foot-long legs invisible? No, they are not. He is rude and invasive and he sounds like a hick when he talks. I hate him.

Mexico was nice. I hate that word—nice. What the fuck does it really mean anyway? I guess I may have to hand deliver this to you tomorrow, but know this Other Pressersons: You are missed, and I hate the Yankee Doodle Pig Dog beside me. His knee is where my knee has to go. There is no other spot for my knee. I hate him with the special hate I usually reserve for the diabolical and wicked. My body is seizing. Giant asses are in my personal space. We're two hours from Seattle. I am bereft. The only positive I can take from this grotesque experience is that I have yet to see a snake on this plane. Yet.

Please Save Me,
Colin (smiley face drawn here)

And that is what it was like to be on that plane ride that day, snakes or no snakes. I'm not going to lie Kittlings, it wasn't pretty. This postcard was only the beginning of what was to devolve into a swirling vortex of bad dreams, booze, and earaches. It took me two months to even begin to remember that grizzly flight, and it'll likely take me two more to recover from the giant fissures seared into my consciousness by the several tons psychic debris that landed upon my fragile mind that day. Such is the adventurer's peril when the call of the road gets too loud to ignore.

For, as Special Agent Dale Cooper so elegantly put it, "it just goes to prove the point that once a traveler leaves his home, he loses almost 100% of his ability to control his environment."

Maybe I'll just give up flying altogether and take a Russian Nuclear Icebreaker to find the Arctic Hole that leads to the middle of the "Hollow Earth," (if you think I'm making this up, go to Steve Curry's Expedition Company at www.expeditioncompany.net, and click on the drop down menu to choose "Voyage to Our Hollow Earth Tour.")

I'm especially fond of the itinerary for the trip, with a gleeful "Weeeeeeeeeeeeeee!" saved for days 15 and 16: "Monorail trip to City of Eden to visit Palace of the King of the Inner World."

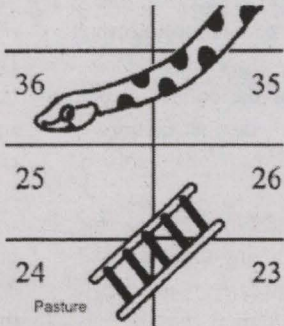
Who'd have thunk they'd have monorails inside the hollow earth? You also get to meet the "Lost Tribes of Israel" and pass by such exciting places as Franz Josef Land. Sounds delightful.

Enjoy your May issue of the Other Press. It's better than air travel. It's the Russian Nuclear Icebreaker of college newspapers. Next stop: the middle of reading enjoyment!

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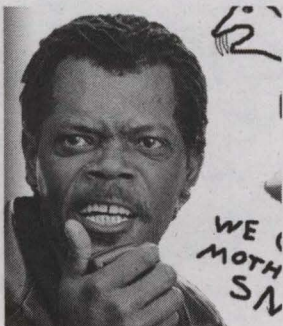
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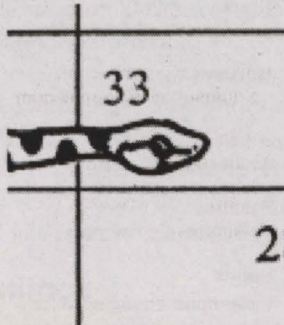


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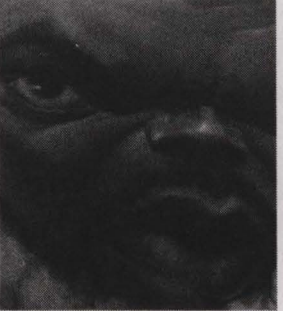


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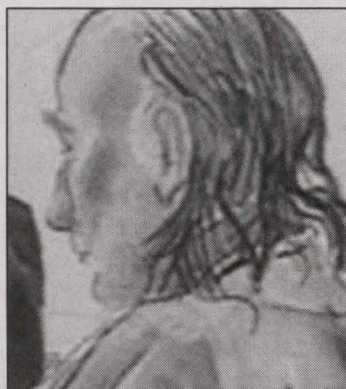
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Pickton Trial Develops Public now allowed to view court records

Nicole Burton, News Editor



The ongoing trial of Robert Pickton for the murders of 27 Downtown Eastside women continues at the British Columbia Supreme Court in New Westminster. But, in what is considered one of the most high-profile cases in the history of Canada, few developments have been revealed to the public since the trial began on January 30, 2006.

In April, the court determined that members of the general public are now able to view court rulings at the court registry. Such rulings are still not available to be reproduced in the media.

"There is no principled basis upon which to deny access to the substance of the rulings," said Justice James Williams of the BC Supreme Court to media last month. He still maintains that the ban on media during the trial is to ensure Pickton receives a fair trial. A jury is expected to be selected for the case in the next few months.

Students' Union a Hotbed of Fraud, Dysfunction, and Cronyism Ex-insiders Claim

JJ McCullough, OP Contributor



Two high-profile, outgoing members of the Douglas College Students' Union have come out swinging against their former employer, painting a harshly critical picture of the organization in an exclusive interview with the Other Press. The two were contacted in response to a recent forensic audit of the Students' Union, a report which alleged that the DSU has been engaged in widespread financial mismanagement, misuse of member funds, and deliberately deceptive bookkeeping for several years. Joel Koette, the union's former Pride Liaison, and Jessica Gojevic, the former treasurer, both maintain that the concerns highlighted in the audit are symptomatic of the organization's larger internal problems.

Koette and Gojevic, who describe themselves as "friends and allies" united in a common cause, were largely

unsurprised by the audit's findings and are quick to characterize the DSU as being fundamentally "dysfunctional," both organizationally and financially. "We have no accounting system per se, we have no filing system, we have deficiencies and inefficiencies all over the place," says Gojevic. Their longstanding concern with the organization's internal management eventually led the two to become the leading proponents of the April 2006 forensic audit, a move both agreed was long overdue.

Despite the firmness of their own convictions, the DSU's representative council—the organization's primary governing body—was from far being universally sympathetic to their cause. The two describe the council as being "split right down the middle" into two distinct factions who have persistently refused to work together—on the audit or indeed most other matters.

From their perspective, Koette and Gojevic view the rift in largely populist terms, characterizing their camp as the one willing to defend students' interests, while their opponents simply defend the rights of their friends.

"There's one faction that is loyal to the membership and the other one seems to be loyal to this individual, and that seems to be where the split is," says Gojevic, referring to the polarizing nature of Joey Hansen, the DSU's embattled former finance and services co-ordinator who was singled out by the forensic audit as being the employee at the centre of many of the most egregious allegations of financial misconduct.

While Govejic, Koette, and their follow allies on council Elizabeth Helps and Brandon Ferguson successfully managed to pass a resolution firing Hansen on April 19, the legality of the move has since been vigorously contested by his supporters on council.

"It doesn't make sense to me," said an exasperated Gojevic. "I can't figure these people out. I don't know

what they're being told. I don't know what they're being given. I don't know how they're being controlled. I don't understand. But it's clear, it's blatant that they [the other members of the DSU] are protecting someone."

She admits it may be too early to ascribe purely malevolent motivations, however. "I don't know if it's just complete ignorance or if it's vindictive in some way," she says. "If there's some master plan, I have no idea."

The polarization of council does not just center around Hansen, however. Hearing the members speak, the roots of the current division frequently lead back to the DSU's decision to purchase a new students' union building back in January of 2005. The move was highly controversial at the time—the 2005 council election saw candidates running on pro- and anti-building slates—and the matter still divides opinions today.

Gojevic and Koette—who both ran on the anti-building slate—characterize the purchase as the trigger which ignited many of their suspicions. "We asked 'where's the money coming from, how are we going to pay for this, is this a smart idea?'" says Koette. "We were told 'yes, yes, yes.' We were told that everything was fine. We were told our budget was fine. And that's sort of when Jessica and I began asking questions."

Though the new building cost the DSU over a million dollars, according to the 2006 forensic audit, the documentation relating to the purchase was never formally released, leading to accusations that the cash used to secure the payments was misappropriated from other areas of the DSU budget, notably the Health and Dental Plan.

Since March of 2006, the Douglas College Board of Directors has withheld all student fees from the DSU, cutting off the organization's financial lifeblood. The College

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DSU Council's Final Meeting Highlights Internal Tensions

JJ McCullough, OP Contributor

Polarized opinions and mutual feelings of distrust were clearly evident at the Douglas College Students' Union's final "lame duck" session of the 2005–2006 Representative Council.

As the DSU's primary policy-making organ, in the last year the Council has frequently been the forum through which many of the union's most intense internal conflicts are brought into the public spotlight. The tense gathering of April 28 was clearly no exception, with a handful of members briefly exchanging accusations of electoral fraud, before the meeting itself was abruptly adjourned through the deliberate misuse of obscure parliamentary procedure.

Though DSU Council meetings are formally open to all students, the meeting of April 28, unusually scheduled on 7:30pm on a Friday night, was a predictably sparsely attended affair. Held in the Students' Union's large basement boardroom, a small and visibly diverse group consisting of six formal board members and a handful of other hangers-on sat scattered around a large oval table.

Formally, the purpose of the meeting was to ratify the results of the recent DSU election, but the agenda quickly got side-tracked over the related matter of whether or not to approve a controversial report that contested many of the election results themselves.

To understand the nature of DSU operations, it is important to realize that the outgoing council has been bitterly polarized between two competing factions within its ranks—a polarization that has in turn characterized the manner in which most of its decisions are made. The 2005

council election of last spring was a hotly partisan affair, and resulted in a Board split between two distinct states that had run in strong opposition. Since then, consensus on any matter has often been hard to secure.

The electoral report presented at the April 28 meeting quickly ignited a feud. The legalistic four-page report, authored by Kameron Bajwa, a member of the DSU's electoral committee, made a number of accusations, alleging the existence of a conspiracy to "result in members of the Renewal slate being [sic] unelected" through the manipulation of vote tallies and membership of the electoral commission. Among others, those singled out as anti-Renewal conspirators by Bajwa were Elizabeth Helps and Jessica Gojevic, two council members of the opposing slate who were present at the meeting.

After some brief debate on the matter, Gojevic quietly gathered her belongings and left the boardroom. With only five council members left in attendance, Helps then called a point of order on the matter of quorum, and in response, the chair abruptly cancelled the meeting. The second word of the decision escaped his lips, members fled from room quickly and silently—clearly glad to escape the tense atmosphere. By deliberately "pulling quorum" and triggering the meeting's end, Gojevic and Helps ensured that Kameron Bajwa's report was never ratified, a move which apparently allowed the two to escape any allegations of fraud.

With the dissolution of their final meeting occurring prematurely, a number of outstanding issues were never

fully resolved by outgoing board. Joey Hansen, the DSU's controversial former finance and services coordinator who is at the centre of many allegations of wrongdoing, was narrowly fired by the council at a previous meeting, but the legality of the move was quickly contested by Hansen's supporters within the body.

Many expected the April 28 meeting to revisit the matter, but instead it appears that the problem will have to be addressed by the new council at some future time. Implementing the specific accountability reforms recommended in the DSU's recent sweeping forensic audit will similarly remain the new council's prerogative.

Only two of the incumbent members of the 2005–2006 Representative Council are returning for the 2006–2007 term: former College Relations Coordinator Heidi Taylor is now the newly elected DSU treasurer, and Inder Gill, a former Member-at-Large, successfully switched positions to become External Relations Coordinator. The "Crush" slate, whose members favoured both the audit and the firing of Hansen now hold a narrow plurality on council, and may thus ensure such matters are resolved quickly. An opposition still remains, however, and if past trends are any indication, as long as the council remains polarized it could take a long time before any decisive decisions are made.

The members of the new DSU Council formally assumed office on May 1. Their first board meeting will likely be held shortly after.

Students' Union a Hotbed of Fraud, Dysfunction, and Cronyism Ex-insiders Claim: Continued from p. 4

has maintained that the DSU's inability to provide accurate financial audits give the Board the right to suspend funding until certain conditions can be met. Koette notes with dry humor that the DSU now only has \$11 in its bank account. Since the cutoff, the Union has bounced several cheques and remains unable to pay its own staff, thus making the organization essentially bankrupt and stagnant.

Regardless, the DSU's inability to distribute paycheques is ultimately of little consequence to the two outgoing dissidents. Joel Koette chose not to run again in the April DSU elections, and Jessica Gojevic lost her bid for re-election as treasurer to Heidi Taylor, the Students' Union's former College relations coordinator and a woman who Gojevic claims "doesn't agree with anything that was put forth in the forensic audit." "I really honestly, from the bottom of my heart hope that she will come to her senses," adds Gojevic, but she clearly remains skeptical. She identifies Taylor as one of the council members most loyal to Joey Hansen, and says that the new treasurer not only opposed his firing, but also hopes to keep him employed in the DSU. Because Hansen remains at the centre of the forensic audit's most damning allegations of wrongdoing, it has been suggested that the funding stalemate between the College Board and the Students' Union may continue indefinitely so long as he remains formally employed at the DSU.

Taylor, who was contacted in response, did not deny that she hoped Hansen could remain at the DSU, but strongly disagreed with Gojevic's claim that his continued

employment would make peace with the College impossible to achieve. She likewise characterized the forensic audit as a politically motivated, flawed document full of "misinformation" and "half-truths," and suggested Gojevic and Koette had used the matter to stage a "witch-hunt" against Hansen.

"There are things that have gone wrong and there are screw ups that the Students' Union has made," said Taylor in a brief telephone interview. "But I think the desperate thing is that most people just want to pin it on one person when more people should take responsibility for what has happened."

I ask Gojevic and Koette if they, as longtime members of the DSU council, feel in any way responsible for the organization's worsening financial situation and increasing inability to govern. The reply is a strong no.

"The minutes of every single rep committee show—and I encourage students to look them up—that there are three elected representatives who have done everything in their power to fix things," says Koette in reference to himself, Gojevic, and Elizabeth Helps, his group's loyal third partner. "We gave clear warnings about almost everything."

So what happens next? In a worst-case scenario, the provincial government would eventually step into the conflict and revoke the Students' Union's status as an independent society. For all intents and purposes, the DSU would then cease to function. All of its former assets, including the Students' Union building, would become property of the College, to be used for whatever new pur-

poses their board sees fit.

"It's happened elsewhere," notes Koette. "The College of the Rockies, Selkirk...a number of students' unions have had similar issues and they've gone right under."

Between the two of them, Koette and Gojevic have a total of nearly eight years experience in DSU politics, yet both clearly appear relieved to be leaving. Though neither will be serving on the 2006–2007 council, both vow to keep up-to-date with any new developments within the students' union, albeit as private students.

"People need to stop making these elections and this student's union a glorified popularity contest full of frat boys and frat girls," says Gojevic, adding that she will have "no problem" initiating a grassroots impeachment drive of council members if no changes are made soon.

After our interview concluded, I met with Jessica Gojevic a second time, alone in DSU headquarters. Candidly, she revealed that she and Koette had an even more ambitious plan in mind to hold the Union to account for its past actions.

"We believe that this organization is negligent, we've seen it from the inside, and we want to make sure students are aware of the fact that they are able to sue," she said. "Because of that, we will be starting a class action lawsuit if nothing positive happens. We have probably close to 30 or 40 students willing to join it now, and that's without us doing any kind of advertising about it at all. But we will be on campus telling people about what we're doing, and they'll have a right to join."

Forensic Review of DSU: A Summary

Vince Yim, OP Contributor

The Other Press recently obtained a document reviewing the financial transactions of the Douglas Student Union (DSU). This forensic review, prepared by Ronald Parks at Blair Mackay Mynett Valuations Inc. (dated April 18, 2006), contains several citations of questionable business practices and makes a few recommendations, which begin with the replacement of the finance coordinator, Joey Hansen.

After scouring over financial documents and interviewing key staff members, the review reveals findings that could have a direct affect on the student population. Currently, the DSU's funds—which are collected from every Douglas student—are being withheld by the college due to issues raised in a 2005 Post-Audit Memorandum. The memorandum found that DSU was in violation of Section 21 of the College and Institute act, which states that the institution can cease transactions with the student society in the event that audited financial statements are not submitted in a timely manner. Basically, the DSU filed papers with the college indicating that audits had been conducted for the last three years. At the time of these filings, no such audits had actually been completed.

Despite the fact that the audited statements were not in order, allowing the college to act accordingly, DSU now purports to be in compliance with the College and Institute Act, and has filed a lawsuit in an attempt to get the 2005–2006 transfer payments.

The report also gives details on the purchase of the land and building across from the college at 70 8th Street for \$1.2M. This is problematic for several reasons. For one, this resulted in a negative cash flow for the DSU, which would mean that money would have to be reallocated from different sources, such as the Health and Dental Plan. Additionally, property taxes for 2005 are still owing to the city of New Westminster, which are up to \$37,909 as of April 18, 2006.

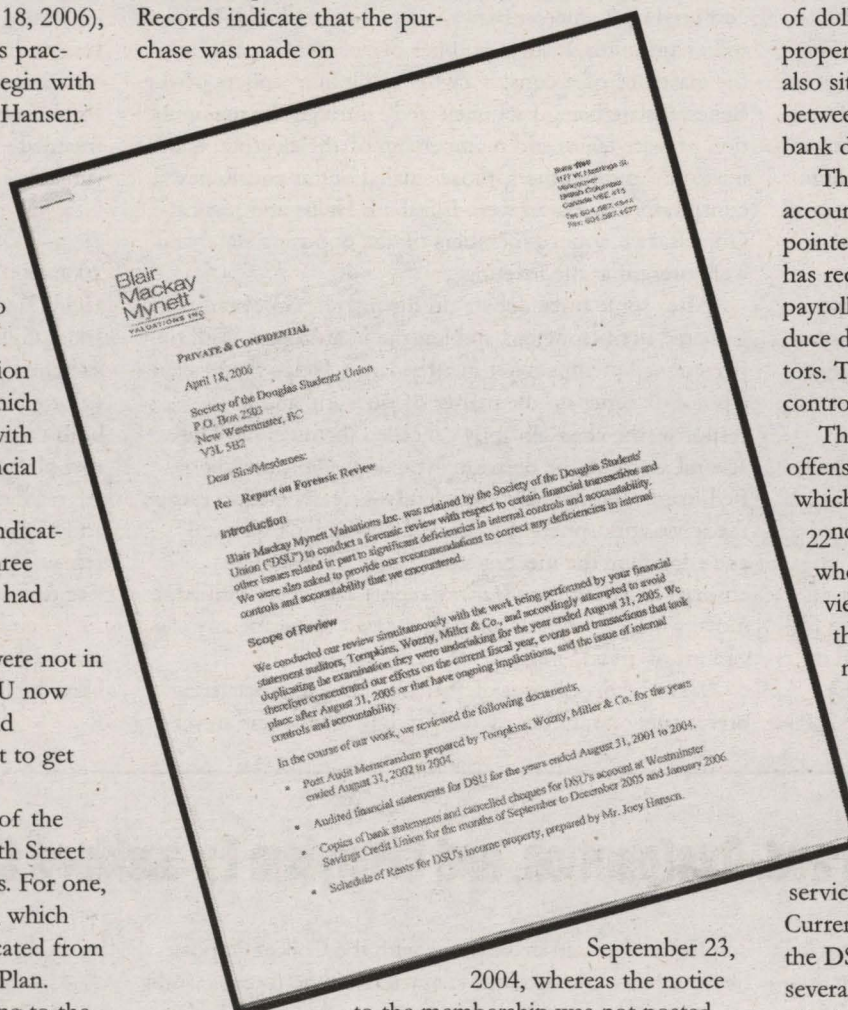
There is also an indication that the purchase was done in violation of the DSU's own bylaw, which indicates that purchases over \$10,000 must involve informing the general membership (read: the student body). Records indicate that the purchase was made on

ledgers are out of date, no budgets have been prepared since 2001, and the last recorded cash deposit in the general ledger was in August 2004. Cash handling is also questioned. Cheques valued in tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars have gone uncashed for months on end, while proper records of cash deposits are not kept. The report also cites an instance in which there is \$36,000 discrepancy between cash register receipts from the Union's Market and bank deposits in September 2005.

The report reveals other observations about the level of accountability and internal control at DSU. Much of this is pointed at finance and services director Joey Hansen, who has received “over one hundred cheques in addition to payroll.” The report suggests that Hansen has yet to produce documentation to justify these cheques to the auditors. The report notes this as a “serious breach of internal control and accountability.”

The report also suggests possible fraud and criminal offenses, as the report tracks down a cheque for \$20,000, which was dated December 6, 2004 and repaid December 22nd 2004. The cheque was issued to Christa Peters, who has a personal relationship with Hansen. In interviews, Hansen confirmed this fact and indicated that the money was used as a loan for making a down payment on a house. While the loan was repaid, Hansen does not have the authority to approve a loan as such, which could constitute fraud and possible criminal charges.

Most students are unaware of how this can affect them, but given the fact the college is withholding funds pending a full audit, several of the services offered by the DSU will be called into question. Currently, many of the on-campus clubs registered with the DSU are unable to get at their funds, which has led to several cheques bouncing. As Hansen has not yet provided all of the necessary documentation (as of the writing of the report), all audits are incomplete. Until this happens, the college will not be releasing any funds to the DSU.



September 23, 2004, whereas the notice to the membership was not posted until October 27, 2004. Also notable is DSU's accounting practices. General



Respect the Military, But Don't Lower the Flag



Right Hook

JJ McCullough, OP Columnist

Whenever a soldier dies in the line of duty it is always an unquestionably tragic event. Soldiers are men and women like anyone else, with parents, children, friends, spouses, and lives of their own. Though their career of choice may be an admittedly dangerous profession, the death of a soldier is still the death of an ambitious kid in the prime of their life—and no less traumatic as a result. The question is whether or not such intimate, family tragedies should also be considered national tragedies. Under the previous Liberal government, the answer was clearly yes. During the Chrétien and Martin administrations, whenever a Canadian soldier died in Afghanistan the death was treated as an unprecedented crisis, with the flags on parliament hill lowered, lengthy orations in parliament, and live funeral coverage on the CBC.

There were a number of underlying reasons for such overdramatic attitudes, perhaps the single largest being the classical liberal guilt complex. It's worth remembering that Jean Chrétien was never entirely keen on sending troops to Afghanistan in the first place and waffled wildly in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 on the matter. Supporting an American-led military adventure in the Middle East was an action that seemed to contradict every bone in the Prime Minister's liberal body. Yet it was an emotional time, and the public pressures for Canada to contribute to the retaliation against Al-Qaeda were ultimately too great to resist.

So the troops were deployed.

As the years progressed, getting overly melodramatic about each ensuing casualty helped the Liberals compromise with their guilty consciences and exaggerate the degree to which the Afghanistan mission was unusual. When each soldier's death was played up as an event worthy of days of nationwide mourning, the intended message was clear: Canada is not a military nation and we are unaccustomed to the sacrifices of war. This is something we are doing for America and at a heavy cost to ourselves.

Our new government, under Stephen Harper, has challenged the value of perpetuating this weepy narrative, in large part because the Conservatives were always more genuinely dedicated to the Afghanistan mission in the first place. Unlike the Liberals, who increasingly viewed the conflict as some sort of Canadian favour to the Bush Administration, the CPC actually understood the mission on a more sophisticated (and accurate) level; namely, as a worthwhile military endeavour to promote freedom abroad and safety at home. Such is the historical legacy of the Canadian armed forces—the mission is hardly unprecedented in either scope or spirit.

Clearly, Harper is well aware that turning each Afghanistan casualty into the subject of its own private, overblown media circus does little more than distract attention from the larger goals of Canada's military mandate. It may help TV ratings, but overly frantic, emotional coverage of Canada's war dead ultimately does little more than sensationalize events that should be dignified and private.

The PM has thus banned the media from broadcasting live coverage of soldier's caskets being unloaded from returning transport planes, and has announced the Canadian flag will no longer be lowered on federal buildings for each new death. Remembrance of the fallen will still occur in a dignified manner, but on November 11th, granting Afghanistan soldiers the same respect that has been given to all of Canada's war dead for the past 80 years.

Many high-profile Liberals, including Ujjal Dosanjh

(who has somehow wound up as his party's defense critic), have predictably criticized Harper's moves as Bush-style attempts at secrecy and conspiracy. There is nothing fundamentally American about choosing to respect fallen soldiers collectively, rather than individually, however. No matter what country you live in, the army is a collective organization, with collective goals, collective interests, and collective sacrifices. When the government and media treat each military death as being the moral equivalent of a teenage car crash—unpredicted, gruesome, and meaningless—they are actually doing a far greater disservice to the collective institution of the military and the public's conception of it than any acts of Prime Ministerial censorship. The army is not simply some meat grinder in which kids are sent as some on the left will imply. It is a noble career of bravery and honour, in which individuals have freely expressed a willingness to endanger their own lives in order to protect the safety of others.

Mourning is important, but to view the military as solely being an institution of death, and only celebrating symbols of the military that remind us of death, is ultimately in no one's interest but those who despise the military in the first place.

For years, the armed forces in this country have gone under-funded, under-staffed, and ignored by successive governments. We now have what is probably the most pro-military government in two decades, and yet Harper is still criticized for his disrespectful attitude towards our troops. To liberals in the media and elsewhere, respect can apparently only be shown through gestures that portray soldiers as the unwilling victims of a pointless American war. Canada should not even be a part of it in the first place. More upbeat actions, such as having the PM visit the troops in Kabul or, you know, actually increasing funding to the army, are dismissed as mere Bush-style PR stunts.

There is certainly some truth to the claim that the less we are visibly reminded of death on the battlefield, the firmer we will be in our foreign policy resolve. This sounds

Continued: p.8

Drugs are Bad, Mmmmkay? Especially the Legal Ones



Left Overs

Iain Reeve, OP Fella

Drugs get a bad rap. At least some of them do. If Canada's drug use were a clubhouse, all the different types of alcohol and cigarettes would be inside rocking out while

heroin, cocaine, and speed have to hang outback by the dumpster. Marijuana might get let in through the West entrance but he'd have to keep a low profile.

There are, of course, good reasons for all this. Hard drugs mess you up something fierce. They get you addicted, destroy your relationships, cost you all kinds of cash, and may even get you all kinds of dead. Our good friends alcohol and cigarettes don't do that, right?

Well the news is out kids and it isn't good for our favourite vices. While there is certainly more to consider than the monetary cost of drug use, a recent study showed that 80 percent of the \$40 billion a year that drugs cost us comes from hooch and smokes. So that means you can take everything, smack, crack, speed, pot, shrooms, dust, E, Lucy in the sky, juice, PCP, and everything else you can shove in an orifice that makes you feel wacky, add it all together, and it costs society only a quarter of what cigarettes and alcohol do.

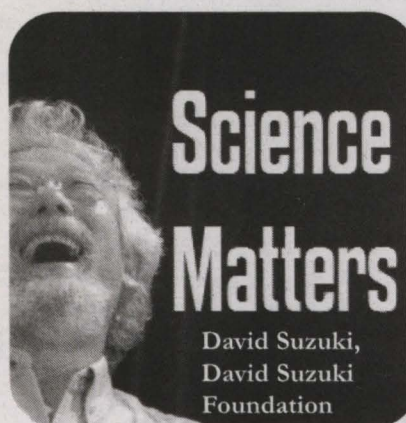
So how are we to deal with this news? Crazies on both

sides of the drug issue will make the following recommendations. People on the ultra liberal pro-drug drug side will use this to further the case that legalizing pot and decriminalizing heroin to some degree is unlikely to cause any more harm than existing drugs. If pot use has not increased significantly in states where it was legalized and current use only causes a fraction of the social stress that smoking and boozing do, then why not legalize it? Ultra conservatives, terrified by the cost of alcohol and cigarettes, will call for their banishment.

I can't say I agree with either of these positions. If we legalize everything, shit will hit the fan. How can you say that one harmful substance isn't as harmful as another, simply because we accept it more out of tradition and economics than any actual desire to have it around? Besides, much of the reason alcohol and cigarettes take such a heavy toll on society is because of their widespread use. The number of people I've met in my life who have used heroin is closer to the number of people I know who don't

Continued: p.8

Public Concern about Climate Change on the Rise



When global warming is on the front cover of science journals, *Time* magazine, and *Vanity Fair* all at the same time, you know you've reached some sort of universal state of concern.

That concern is palpable as I cross Canada on an extensive book tour. At every stop, I get questions. And right now, the majority of them are about our climate.

What's going on? Is climate change really as bad as they say it is? Haven't we solved this problem? Isn't Kyoto going to fix it? Are we even in Kyoto anymore? I wish I had the answers to all these questions, but I don't, and that is only adding to people's concerns.

We do know that our climate is changing because of all the heat-trapping gases we keep pumping into the atmosphere. We haven't solved the problem. In fact, we've barely addressed it at all. Some countries have reduced their emissions, but Canada has been one of the worst offenders. Our climate change emissions are way above the Kyoto targets we are supposed to meet by 2012.

Unfortunately, our new federal government seems to have adopted a somewhat defeatist attitude about the

problem. Instead of coming up with bold and exciting ways to meet our targets, Ottawa is saying it can't be done, so Canada will ignore our Kyoto commitment and work on other things instead, even though we've made an international commitment.

One of those other initiatives is to consider joining an Asia Pacific Partnership on climate change. It has no targets or timelines and is largely considered ineffectual in reducing emissions. While the Asia Pacific Partnership and Kyoto aren't mutually exclusive, joining the former and ignoring the latter would be a strong indication that Prime Minister Harper isn't serious about fighting climate change.

Politically, that could be a huge mistake. Although the Conservatives never ran on an environmental platform—in fact, some might say the opposite—Canadians are very concerned about climate change, and understandably so. As a northern nation, Canada has much to lose from a rapidly changing, warming, and more disrupted climate. The further north you go, the higher the temperature increases and the greater the impacts. That doesn't mean more pleasant weather. It means hard costs as permafrost melts and roads disintegrate. It means more beetle infestations and fires in our forests. It means more droughts on the prairies.

So Canadians have a lot to lose, and they know it. In fact, a recent 30-nation survey found that 90 percent of Canadians say climate change is a serious problem, and nearly 60 percent say it's very serious. That's about average compared to the other nations surveyed, but well above the United States.

Yet in spite of this concern and support, the federal government's willingness to deal effectively with the issue is still lukewarm. Mr. Harper keeps talking about a "made-in-Canada" plan, as though previous plans were made elsewhere. And he has dismantled most of the previous government's initiatives—even the good ones.

The result? Canada is adrift on this issue. We have much to lose, but no plan to change and, as a result, our emissions keep going up. Businesses aren't seeing the stability and certainty they need to invest in the future. We've stalled on an issue that Canadians are becoming increasingly passionate about.

If the Conservatives fail to address Canadians' concerns, they could be painted with the same brush that tarred the Liberals during the last election—arrogant, out of touch, and unaccountable. And that's hardly the stuff that builds a majority government or a stable climate.



Right Hook continued:

a bit callus at first glance, but at the end of the day, Canadians will have to ask themselves what sort of foreign and military policy we actually want for this country. Do we want a nation where our international actions are guided by how much we dislike seeing caskets on television, or by a genuine, long-term strategy to promote peace and stability in the Middle East? Is safeguarding the nation against a terror attack tomorrow less important than seeing the maple leaf flying half-mast at the post office today?

Death is part of life and casualties are part of the military. If Canadians cannot bear the thought of either, perhaps we shouldn't bother with an army at all.

Left Overs continued:

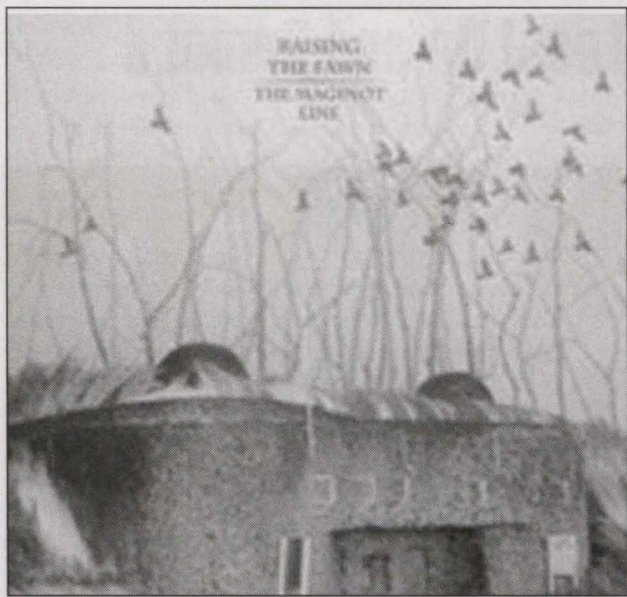
drink. Mass use of pot or any other drug which is, on an individual use basis, more dangerous will ultimately have a heavier cost on society.

I'd love to see a day where we get rid of cigarettes, but it would take some time. I've been around one person quitting smoking; not sure I'd want to be around millions. As for booze...well, I don't want to give it up. Call me a hedonist. Unlike most, however, I know about a little thing called moderation. Alcohol is so entrenched in our society that it would take some heavy-handed deeds to get rid of it. Instead, maybe we should turn our society into classy James Bond style drinkers, instead of slovenly Ozzy Osborne bingers. That would take at least ease some of the strain off our poor society, both monetarily and emotionally.



Raising the Fawn – The Maginot Line

Brady Ehler, OP Contributor



John Crossingham and Scott Remila return with a worthy follow-up to Raising the Fawn's epic 2004 release, *The North Sea*. However, the new album, *The Maginot Line*, was recorded by a different band.

Shortly after *The North Sea* was recorded, band members, Julie Booth and Jon Drew decided to call it quits. For the new album, a new drummer, Dylan Green, was added to the fold. Julie was not replaced and the band decided to continue on as a three piece. With such a drastic change in the structure of the band, it is a little surprising how similar *The Maginot Line* sounds to *The North Sea*.

There are differences, however. As a whole, the new album is more reserved. Gone are the light-hearted pop sensibilities that salted *The North Sea*. This release is a much darker, restrained affair, especially as the album progresses. The triumphant moments are still there, but they are a little less joyous. The emotional high-points of the album are in the sad parts, such as the tender finalé, "Nocturne No.2," a

love song that is whispered over an arpeggiated electric guitar.

Still, the dynamic and unbridled creativity of Raising the Fawn remains intact. There are hushed instrumentals, relentless, spiraling epics, and mini-songs linking the larger compositions throughout the album.

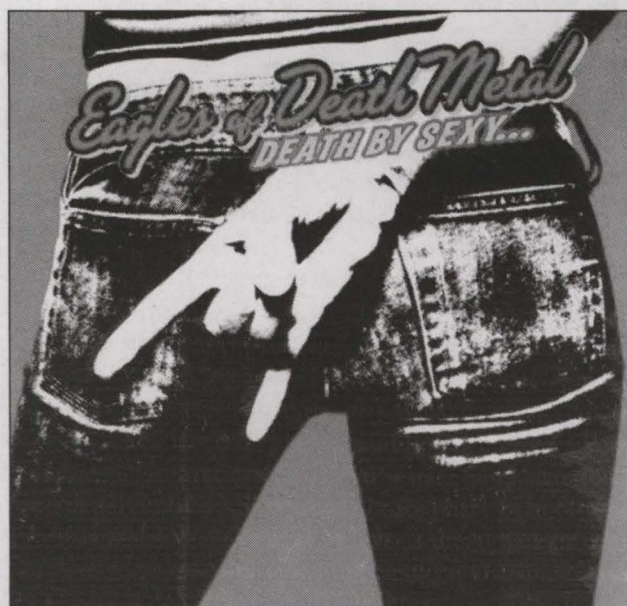
What is so refreshing about *The Maginot Line* is that there is always wide range of different approaches to the songs, so the album stays fresh for a long time. The musicians attack their instruments in new and exiting ways from one track to the next. Crossingham uses chords that your guitar player's handbook forgot to list, and then some.

Even so, *The Maginot Line* is also quite accessible.

I have always thought that if marketed correctly, Raising the Fawn could make a shit-load of money. They have that rare gift of being both extremely listenable, yet on the cutting edge of rock.

The Eagles of Death Metal – Death By Sexy

Brady Ehler, OP Contributor



To those of you who haven't heard the band before, EODM is not, in fact, a death metal band. They use distorted guitars, bass, and drums like a death metal band, but that is where the similarities end. No, *Death by Sexy* is decidedly more sexy than deathly, as all songs are about lust, screwing, or wanting to screw.

The lyrics are especially sexy. Here is an excerpt from "Just Nineteen": "I gotta feeling that you wanna come over/I get you here and I will make you roll over/Now look it baby, you're just nineteen."

Ok, so it's not exactly deep, but so what? *Death by Sexy* isn't about pointing out the flaws in our society, nor is it a vehicle for personal catharsis. No, this album is about the simple joy of listening to catchy music...very, very sexy, catchy music.

As with the previous release, Jessie "The Devil" Hughes and Carlo Von Sexron (aka Josh Homme of Queens of the Stone Age fame) deliver a batch of tight-knit, bluesy pop-rock-with-an-edge gems. Essentially, these

are pop songs about girls, custom made for indie nerds. Yes, finally such a thing exists! And because *Death by Sexy* is so tongue-in-cheek—and rock as fuck—there is no guilt in listening to it.

If you liked the band's debut, *Peace, Love and Death Metal*, then you will not be disappointed. *Death by Sexy* is in a similar vein, the songs are just tighter and more refined. If you haven't heard EODM before, I suggest putting this disc on at a party—you'll love them forever. This is pure concentrated party music; it's got a solid beat, it's energetic, but not grating, and it is, of course, sexy as hell.

The only real downside to this album is that all of the best tracks, which also happen to be the fastest, are on the first half of the album. As a result of this initial, furious love-making, *Death by Sexy* blows its load prematurely. Fortunately, the disc dutifully soldiers on with slower, more drawn out compositions for less intense, but longer-lasting pleasure.

TV on the Radio – Return to Cookie Mountain

Luke Simcoe, OP Contributor



I was a big fan of *Desperate Youth*, *Bloodthirsty Babes*, and at the risk of sounding ignorant, I'm going to admit that I have no idea if TVOTR's latest album title is a reference to something or just an amusing title that has no deeper meaning. It gives me that feeling that I'm missing out on something, but in this era of blogging and CNN, I just don't feel like doing any thorough journalistic research.

Anyway, on to the music, right? With *Cookie Mountain*, TVOTR establish themselves as one of the most original bands to come out of New York, or anywhere else for that matter. I get the feeling that TVOTR crafted this album to enhance their live repertoire a bit, and in this way, the album is a success. Songs like "Snakes and Martyrs," "Blues From Down Here," and particularly the opener, "Playhouses," are punchy, energetic, and catchy, and I'm really looking forward to seeing them performed at Richard's on May 6.

It's not a complete departure by any means though, and the album definitely contains all the indie rock/synth/jazz/blues/gospel fusion that has become the

group's trademark. "Let the Devil In" even contains a quiet a cappella backing track that harkens back to the band's earlier cover of The Pixies' "Mr. Grieves."

If the album has a downside, it's that in its quest for live punch, it falls prey to over-instrumentation. The drums, guitar, synths, and sometimes horns step up their presence on this album, and do so at the expense of front-man Tunde Adebimpe's vocals, which are easily the band's best instrument. *Cookie Mountain* is a great record that sustains itself better than *Desperate Youth*, but there's not a song on it that can go toe-to-toe with the evocative and haunting glory of "Staring at the Sun," the band's best and most well-known track.

Nevertheless, when so many other New York bands, including The Strokes, Interpol, and yes, even The Yeah Yeah Yeahs—I'm probably going to get stoned to death on the concourse for that one—have gone the way of the cookie cutter, *Return to Cookie Mountain* is refreshing and unique enough that it still ranks among this year's best albums.



NEW MUSIC WEST

Festival Showcases Local Up and Comers

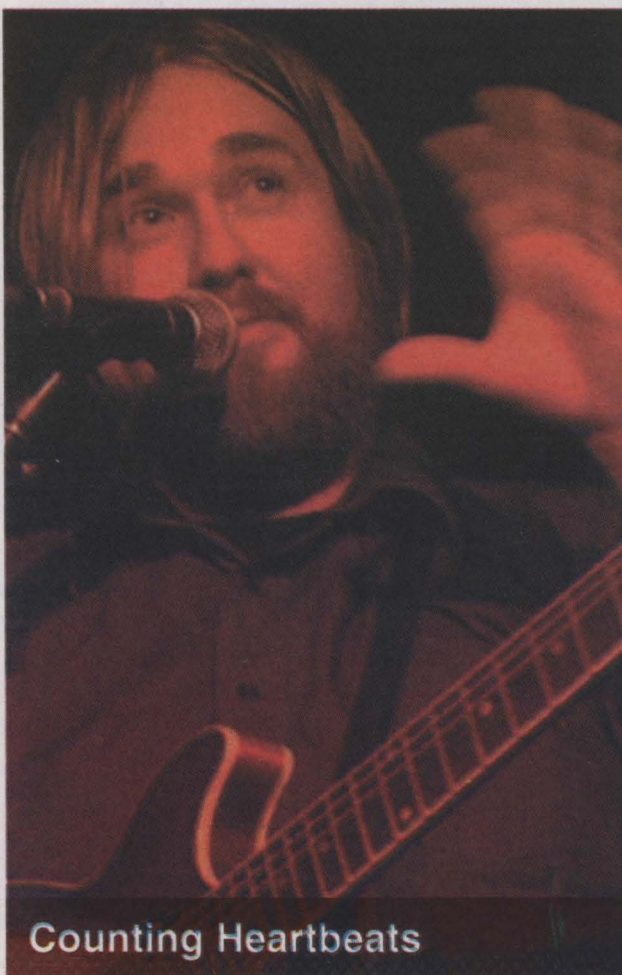
Iain W. Reeve & Brady Ehler, Musical Masochists

The Other Press was on hand for all four days of Vancouver's biggest independent music festival. Here is a break down of what we loved on each of the days. There is definitely some solid talent moving on up here in the west. Keep an eye out for some of the bands mentioned, they could well be the next big thing.

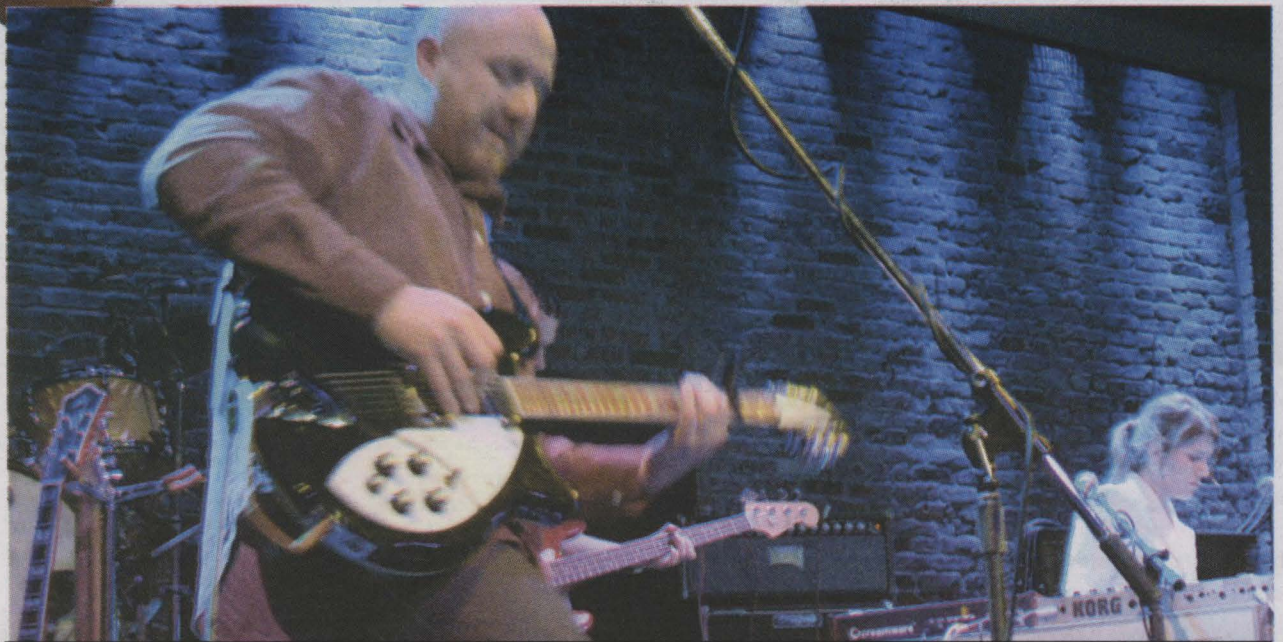
Wednesday:

I started off the evening at eight o' clock at the Roxy, where I caught **The Art of Dying**, who wins the prize for most amusing band description in the pamphlet: "There is no guarantee in life: death. The beginning is simply prey for the end. The art of dying is your life to live." Whoa, that's deep, deep as an outdoor lavatory, which brings to mind a simile for what they sounded like. Well, at least the levels were good. For a minute there I thought I was listening to the radio. But whatever, they will probably be famous someday.

Next stop was the Buffalo club, where I had the pleasure of watching **Jennifer Galt**. Unfortunately, there wasn't much pleasure in *listening* to her. She played some poppy three-chord compositions, which might have sounded alright if it weren't for her benign back-up band. She had a really nice voice though, powerful too. She could stop traffic with them pipes.



Counting Heartbeats



Jonathen Inc.

By 9:50 I found myself at the Media Club, one of my favorite venues in town. The band was a local outfit called **Counting Heartbeats**. I am glad to say they did not disappoint. The dynamic five-piece post-rock-meets-country-meets-slowcore outfit stirred heartstrings, and encouraged feet to begin tapping. They manipulated their keyboard, electric piano, and guitars to squeeze out strange and wonderful sounds, all the while affecting an enthusiastic audience with their feel good/feel sad melodies. The amount of vocals and instrument switching made them seem more like three bands than one. Fortunately, they all sounded good.

The tail end of the evening reared its ugly head with **Blinded** at the Piccadilly Pub. They were a boring alterna-rock band with an emo "edge." After a song and a half, I moved on.

I ended the evening at the Lamplighter, where I caught the art rock duo, **Voltage**. I'm sure most people would listen to them for ten seconds, and just shake their heads. But, I was bobbing my head, because I love that shit. The drummer was a wizard, the guitar player was a chick with pig-tails. She cranked the bass all the way up, and the treble all the way down. She wasn't so much playing guitar as manipulating distortion, but she did it well.

Thursday:

Having spent much of Wednesday running from club to club in a mad fury, hardly seeing more than a few songs by any one band, I decided on Thursday night to park my firm but yielding behind at one of everyone's favourite Vancouver venues: Richard's on Richards. The proposed lineup promised a solid night of emerging Canadian talent.

Just as we arrived home town team **Jonathan Inc.** was about half way through their set. The skillful drive of Glenn D'Cruze on drums and the clever and subtle keyboard stylings of the lovely Michelle Grunert were perfect accentuations for the twangy and often surprisingly rocky Rickenbacker guitar strums of leadman Jonathan Anderson. A strong performance from middle to finish.

Second up was, and I have little trouble saying this, my favourite surprise of the festival. Hailing from Edmonton, **Storyboard** is a four peace of delightfully awkward looking kids who can totally bring the house down. Combining the best aspects of post-rock giants like Sigur Ros and Mogwai, with falsetto vocal styling reminiscent of the aforementioned Sigur Ros as well as Pilate and Radiohead, and some straight multilayered rock a-la Broken Social Scene. Lengthy, dynamic, thick arrangements line a set that does not stop attacking till they say good night.

Following them was an equally strong band of an entirely different style. Pop-folk-rock foot-tapers **Paper**



No No Spots



Meligrove Band

Moon represented my home town of Winnipeg with pride laying out a strong set of songs which inspired much hip swaying and ear-to-ear smiling from band and crowd members alike.

Last on the bill, and one of the most solid next-big-thing bets at the festival, was the **Meligrove Band**. With solid play of their newest video for "Everyone's a Winner," a considerable backlog of material, and a killer live show drawing forward images of groups as diverse as Interpol and Ben Folds, the Meligroves should be making their move soon. And with good reason, only so many bands can keep a rabid audience engaged through a myriad of technical difficulties, especially when their wrist bands would let them walk across the street to another venue. Rocking out, sexy dancing, and laughing were more than encouraged; they were demanded.

Friday:

Not a lot of interesting stuff was going on Friday, and I wasn't in the mood to run around all night, just to catch fragments of miscellaneous acts, so I decided to check out the Boomba Records showcase at The Penthouse. Unfortunately, there were no strippers between acts, but the waitresses all showed a suspicious amount of cleavage.

Run Chico Run was the most impressive band at the festival. It wasn't the best band, however, they were certainly the most versatile musicians. The band was composed of two members, whom I fondly refer to as "Emo Haricut," and "The Porn Stash," for obvious reasons. Emo and The Stash took turns playing drums, keyboards, and guitar. They also sang with intertwining vocal melodies throughout most of the show. Amazingly, they were also both able to play drums, keyboards and sing at the same time. For me, Run Chico, Run was the highlight of the show. Check them out if you like the Blood Brothers, but wish they were less noisy and abrasive.

Pop-rock quartet **Catlow** took the stage at 11:20, and they were pretty darn catchy. They were fronted by Natasha Thrisk, who had a voice that could melt ice, and ignite dry timber. The girl vocals were a nice change, and the band was pretty good too. They sounded like the "indie" version of Jenny Galt.

The final act, **The Salteens**, were a great finale. The ten piece rock orchestra delivered pitch-perfect pop songs, highlighted by a five-piece brass section. One audience member commented: "They are so sugary-sweet I'm going to get diabetes." These guys were like Broken Social Scene's cartoon-watching cousin from the west. If you're a fan of The New Pornographers, or The Polyphonic Spree, give these guys a listen.

Saturday:

Saturday began with the **Socan Speaker's Series**. Industry veteran **Spencer Proffer** regaled with stories of his impressive works with artists such as Paul Simon, Eric Clapton, and Stevie Wonder. He also gave some inspiring affirmation that some in major label music industry still care about "the music." Of particular note was his advice on getting music into film, a solid strategy for the emerging indie artist.

He was followed up by **Daniel Cutler**, soon-to-be-former medium wig from ultra-hot indie label **Arts & Crafts**. A stirring speech about the assets of indie labels of over majors certainly had this reporter convinced. However, I was less than pleased with him when I asked how to curb the geographical and business disadvantage West coast bands face, and he responded, "move to Toronto." Fuck you, move to Toronto!

Phil Towle was next. He is best known as the man who helped Metallica get in touch with their inner feelings in their film "Some Kind of Monster." I was consistently overcome by a feeling that the session was going to end with him offering to sell us something for three easy payments. Rock n' roll self help guru? No thanks.

The Socan Songs and Stories presentation, with artists **Kinnie Star**, **Jeremy Fisher**, and **Leeroy Stagger**, was a fantastic change to not only hear artists let us in on where their songs come from, but also to see artists interact with each other while playing their songs. Very cool to see more than one performer sharing the same stage.

Keynote speaker **Raine Maida** of Our Lady Peace was a pleasant surprise. It was refreshing to hear calls for an acceptance of P2P file sharing, the Internet revolution of music, and the emergence of more indie labels to keep the majors in line, from a big rock-star such as him. Interesting insights abound!

The final night of music was not a slow one. After catching Storyboard's second show we spent some time at the White Whale Records party at the Penthouse, taking in **Octoberman** and **Mohawk Lodge**. Both laid down some wicked pieces of Canadiana. Octoberman's laid-back travel logs from his album *These Trails are Old and New* were a perfect introduction, while Mohawk's more power and scream driven rockers were perfect for the evening's later portions. We were also fortunate to be in the legendary Lamplighter as **Ninjaspy** was taking the stage. Ska-funk-metal while adorned in ninja masks and swords. What more does one need? Perhaps enough volume to hear them several blocks away? While only catching a few songs of **Motion Soundtrack** at the Media Club, the wall of delay driven guitar over some sweet vocal melodies, evoking images of Brit rock giants such as Travis and Stereophonics, made me want to seek out more of this band. It's no wonder they were chosen as one of the best of the festival; the Media Club was packed to dangerous proportions.



Catlow



Run Chico Run

Smith & Hargreaves at the Movies: Benchwarmers

Steph Smith and Trevor Hargreaves, Rob Schneider's Towel Boys



Three outcasts witness a young boy being beaten up on the baseball diamond. They all know how he feels, having been picked on as children as well. Upon hearing that the boy only wanted to play baseball, they devise a plan. They will challenge all the bully baseball teams to a tournament, the winner to receive their very own baseball park. From the production team that brought you most Adam Sandler movies comes this brand new heaping pile of crap!

Smith:

Where do I even start with this monstrosity? I mean, honestly, the only reason I even went was because I was hung over as hell and sitting in the dark watching a mindless movie almost seemed like a good idea at the time. And to be honest, I can see why people would like this movie. It's very lowbrow humour. If you enjoyed the trailer for the film, you'll more than likely enjoy the rest of the crappy ride. Of course, you may need to have suffered moderate to severe brain damage to really get anything out of this flick, but that's okay. Even the clinically brain dead need some kind of entertainment.

Benchwarmers stars your favourite washed up *Saturday Night Live* actors, David Spade and Rob Schneider. I know, it's already screaming sure fire hit, but wait! There's more! It also stars funny-man Jon Lovitz and Napoleon Dynamite, er... Jon Heder. But honestly, it could have been Napoleon Dynamite! He has never and will never play any other role, ever. I don't think he can. Not because of typecasting, but because Jon Heder is actually Napoleon Dynamite. That was not a character, but the real Heder with crazy hair and clothes.

New West Cinemas

555, 6th Street, New Westminster, BC,
V7L 5H1

Ph/Fax: 604.526.0379 Email: ncinemas@yahoo.ca

Movie Info: 604.526.0332

Website: www.atnynmovie.com

Anyway, the film tries hard to be funny, but when something tries too hard, it just looks tired and pathetic. The only laughs I could muster up were due to the fact that the person I was with and I were making ridiculous comments about the film. We were forced to entertain ourselves.

If you want to see something funny, don't see this film. If you feel like paying a few dollars to sit in the dark and mock a movie relentlessly, maybe pay for it. But even then, I think the film is better off being used in an old oil drum to keep people warm under a bridge. And even then, I would be worried that the stink of *Benchwarmers* would permeate into those people and never wash off. This is one of the worst films I have ever seen. I would recommend that it be kept at least 500 feet from all people at all times. Can you issue a restraining order to a movie? I hope so.

Hargreaves:

If one were to ask the writers of this film a question from the well-known Proustian questionnaire by Bernard Pivot, it would certainly be "what is your least favorite word?" The inevitable answer to such a query would likely yield the answer "sucks"; for indeed this film harbours little suckage, and a great deal of fackin' awesomeness.

As all great screenwriters are aware, to craft a truly timeless cinematic classic, several plot elements are necessary. First and foremost, a classic man vs. man or man vs. himself situation must unfold. I forward the classic example of Charles Foster Kane battling with his own isolation in the timeless *Citizen Kane*. The story grips the viewer to their very soul. Another fine example is the timeless battle of the Angel Beach High School guys and their cunning shenanigans against Porky in *Porky's Revenge*. These two cinematic goldmines well-demonstrate the benefit of taking humanity's fear and emotion, deconstructing them, and putting them back together in new and enrapturing ways. Such is the case in the brilliant *Benchwarmers*.

This astounding film quickly establishes a variety of challenges that stir up emotion in even the most hardened of hearts. Within minutes, I was weeping uncontrollably at the blinding beauty of the script. When a boy is held down and farted upon, I shuddered at the cutting edge cinematography. When Josh Heder tapes a baseball bat to his wrist to avoid dropping it, I leapt from my chair and raised my arms to the heavens.

But amazingness and excellentness aren't all this film has to offer. It also delves into a myriad of social issues such as "how to conquer agoraphobia," "what kind of film roles can a second-rate *SNL* alumnus expect to land," and more importantly "In what new and celebrated ways can thirty-three year-olds pick on little kids?"

In short, I was moved. It was simply solid as a rock. On till the crack of dawn. Hotter than a 7/11 bean burrito. Done like disco. Sweet, petit, and ready to meet. Do you dig what I'm telling you? Are you listening? What is your god-damn problem? Shut up and pay attention! Sometimes I feel that you are ugly and fat. This film spoke to me, it speaks to us all. It speaks to America. God bless us. God bless everyone. Oh, and Jon Lovitz shows up driving Knight Rider.

I found it on
teh interweb!



Iain W. Reeve, Internet Ranger

This Week's Website: YouTube and Google Video

YouTube and Google Video are a pair of sites that have been begging to be made. While the Internet has been very good at creating one-stop sites where we can find music and photos of many different kinds in a single place, using a single format, video was a major holdout. For whatever reason, to find funny videos to watch you always had to download three or four different media players, get tons of codecs, download from dozens of sites, and worry about a myriad of formats. Not anymore my friends; a pair of wicked sites have stepped up and unified video under one roof!

The first one, brought to us by our good friends at Google, follows a formula similar to their other work. Going to www.video.google.com will give you a plethora of options. Besides the ability to download episodes of your favourite shows for money, you can also browse a constantly growing number of

videos collected from all over the Internet. Comedy of the intentional and voyeur variety is the centrepiece here, but other videos ranging from odd to informative are also present.

And www.youtube.com has a much more organized feel. Separated into categories, searchable by name, the ability to create a list of your favourite videos, and the ability to upload your own videos, makes YouTube the ultimate video site. Comedic videos, videos taken at concerts, video blogs, video personals, newsreels, for sale ads, video game clips, it's all here. Hours of entertainment, information, and satisfaction for the low low price of free.

So go explore the world of video. Personally, I recommend the recent trend of fake trailers people have created. Try searching "Shining," "Titanic 2," and "Brokeback to the Future" in YouTube for some sweet laughs.

This Thing Rocks

Vince Yim, Resident OP Stoner



Issues reviewed: 1-6

Story by Dan Slott

Art by Andrea DeVitto (#1-5) and Keiron Dwyer (#6)

Founding member of the Fantastic Four, astronaut, and pilot Benjamin Grimm became The Thing after being bombarded with cosmic radiation, causing him to become super strong with rock hard skin, but with a disfigured appearance. Over the years, he learned to accept his situation and even became one of the wealthiest superheroes in New York. However, money changes a lot of things.

With Dan Slott providing the stories, *The Thing* is superhero fun at its best. Because it is separate from the *Fantastic Four* team book, we won't be seeing the typical galactic threats regularly faced by the Fantastic Four. Instead, we see more self-contained storylines and more attention to plot and characterization.

Slott is well-versed in the world *The Thing* inhabits and is aware of how ridiculous the situations in superhero comics can be. The book reflects that, by placing *The Thing* and the supporting characters in situations such as deadly theme parks and then just having fun with the notion. The book doesn't take itself too seriously, which makes it one of the more enjoyable reads today.

Characterization is razor sharp, moving away from the self-pitying tragic figure of *The Thing*'s earlier appearances to the gruff-but-lovable hero that we know today. However, this does not come easier for our hero, even after he becomes wealthy. Most notable of the issues is

#4, where *The Thing* is tasked with babysitting Franklin and Val Richards (the children of Reed and Susan Richards, better known as Mr. Fantastic and Invisible Woman). The end result is a touching story in which the hero learns about the most important things in life.

Given Slott's extensive knowledge of the Marvel Universe, he draws from a huge library of characters to fill the supporting slots. While long-time comic book readers will appreciate the appearance of obscure heroes and villains, there are some downsides to this. New readers will be unfamiliar with the characters and their motivations. Additionally, given the space limitations of each story, usually about 23 pages each, Slott tends to gloss over a lot of the little details, which can lead to some confusion, even for regular comic book readers. As it stands, it is not even explained how *The Thing* became a billionaire.

The artwork is top notch. Andrea DiVitto incorporates a lot of detail and expression into each face and figure, which is easily complimented by the colouring. There are a few glitches in continuity (in one page, *The Thing*'s wardrobe changes in every panel, even though they all occur within seconds of each other), although most readers probably wouldn't mind too much. With Keiron Dwyer taking over (as of #6), there is considerably less detail, although it does have a slightly retro feel, somewhat reminiscent of the art styles of the 70s.

While not necessarily groundbreaking, *The Thing* is a fun book and definitely worthy of a look for both comic book fans and casual readers.



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Cook Book Con-Fidential: A report from the Vancouver Comicon

By Vince Yim, OP Contributor

During a beautiful sunny day in March, when most people should be enjoying the weather, the diehard comic fans wait outside the Heritage Hall. At 10am, the fans pay their \$3 admission and make their way inside.

Comic Book Conventions have been an institution of the comic book industry since the 1960s. Whether one is trying to find good deals on new and rare comics or wants to get autographs and sketches, there is something for every convention-goer. Or, at least it is for those who comic book experience extends beyond *Betty and Veronica*.

These conventions—or “comicons” for short—have changed over the years, especially with the larger conventions held in San Diego and New York. As the comic book industry is constantly changing to reflect the readership, so do comicons.

The Vancouver Comicon, held approximately every two months, also mirrors trends in the comic book industry on a smaller scale. For example, it does not have representatives from the major comic book companies, as the local

comicons are only one-day events, and attendees don’t wear superhero costumes. Still, the most recent convention is seen as one of the more successful ones by the vendors and guests, which reflect a comic book industry moving in a positive direction.

However, things weren’t always this way. Vancouver comic fans may recall the 1993 appearance of Toronto-based Dave Sim (creator of *Cerebus*). Despite the fact that his book sold significantly fewer copies than *X-Men* and his only mainstream work at the time was a guest writing stint in Todd McFarlane’s *Spawn*, lineups to receive sketches and autographs were hours long. Compare this to a 2005 comicon, when local artist Steve Skroce, who has major artistic credits ranging from *Amazing Spider-Man* to *The Matrix* trilogy storyboards, attended and yet had no lineups while overall attendance was considerably lower.

This would seem to coincide with a downturn in the comic book industry, which began in the early 1990s, where consumers were buying large quantities of comics with the intention of selling them for profit later on. Indeed, mainstream media attention to the death of Superman in 1992-made *Superman* #75 an instant best-seller, driving its value to a peak of over \$100. The sudden influx of new comic book buyers caused a rapid expansion of the industry, which collapsed towards 1995 as they quickly left the hobby. This led to the closure of numerous comic book stores and publishers.

With that in mind, perhaps lower comicon attendance is a sign of the times.

Not necessarily, indicates Leonard Wong, who organizes the Vancouver Comicon. “Dave Sim makes one appearance every decade, if that,” Wong explains. “(Skroce’s) here at least every year. When you’re bringing in somebody from out of town who hasn’t been here in a long time and he’s really hot, you’re going to get a longer lineup.”

One of the convention guests, Seattle-based Jay Faerber—writer of the creator-owned *Noble Causes* and Marvel’s *Generation X*—notes on the changes in the industry. “I remember comic book stores that opened in my

area and closed two years later, so I knew it was a boom going on,” Faerber recalls. “It wasn’t going to last like that, just seeing all these crappy comics come out, with characters that nobody wanted to read about with talent that really wasn’t ready.”

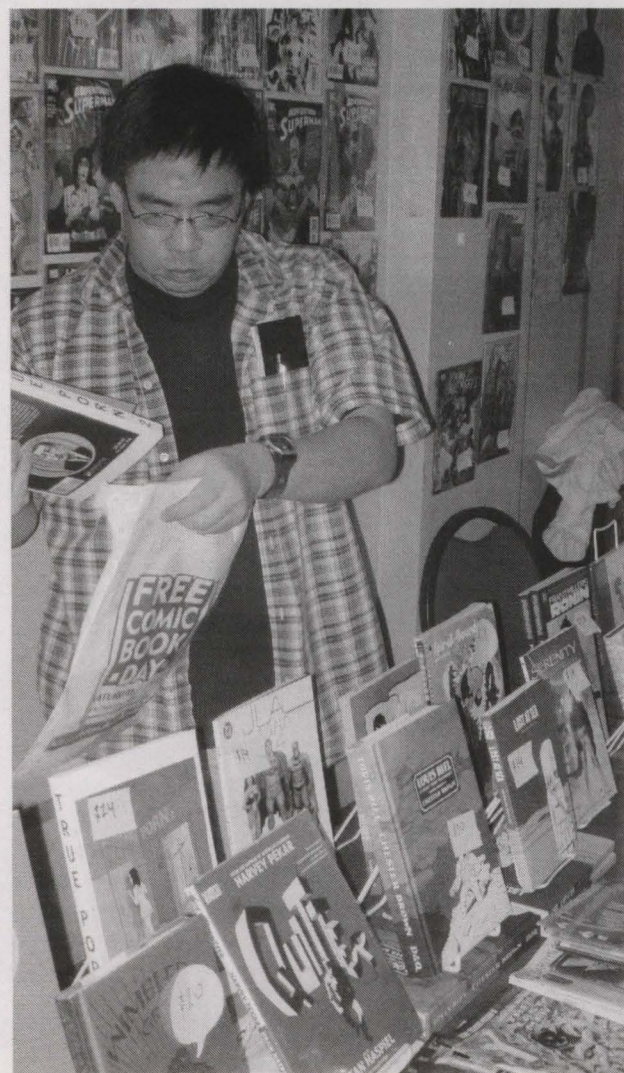
For Faerber and the other convention guests, Pia Guerra (artist on DC Comics’ *Y the Last Man*) and Ian Boothby (writer of *The Simpsons* and *Futurama* for Bongo Comics), success does not come easy. Since the end of the speculator boom led to unemployment in the creative community, the comic book industry was especially harder to break into.

“You knew that if you broke in then, you earned your chops,” Faerber recalls, “Breaking in when I did in 1998, I took as a testament to the fact that I’ve earned this because the boom is over and I’m still able to find work in this medium.”

“It’s doing a lot better,” Guerra says about the industry, “A person coming into the industry can pick and choose instead of just looking at every other clone and trying to decide what’s good. It’s never going to be as big as it was in the 90s because that was all speculation, but it’s better than it’s been in a long time.”

The creators point to the difficulty that is inherent to working in the comic book industry. Not only are there deadlines and general fatigue associated with being chained to a computer or a drawing board, but also career challenges. For example, Faerber also has a day job unconnected to the comic book industry, while Boothby doubles as a writer for television and animation.

Regardless of any sort of quirks in the comic book industry, it chugs merrily along as it evolves and comicons will continue to be a driving force in the industry. Given the creators’ optimism about the comic book industry, the amount of diversity seen in the books, and the quality of what’s available, it would appear that the comic book medium is in a healthy state, if not, the actual comic book industry. Even a bright sunny day cannot deter comic book fans.



Looking Back at Expo 86

The transportation exposition that paved the way for Vancouver

Kevin Welsh, OP Features Editor



With the 2010 Winter Olympics looming on the horizon, those of us that have forgotten Vancouver wasn't always considered a world-class city perhaps should be forgiven. After all, Vancouver hasn't always been considered a city with the infrastructure and corporate clout to host major international events like the Olympics, next year's FIFA Youth World Cup, or historic summit meetings of recent years past. Indeed, there was once a time when Vancouver was considered to be little more than a fledgling 'burb on the west coast—in 1979, ABC sports commentator once referred to Vancouver on national American television as a "village."

Vancouver's transformation from "village" to world-class metropolis can be boiled down to a myriad of decisions. However, we're fast approaching the twentieth anniversary of the event that many believe firmly put Vancouver on the world map was the "successful" hosting of a major, international event that, ironically, ran a deficit of \$311 million dollars: the 1986 World Exposition—more commonly known as Expo 86.

It's difficult to believe that, before the wheels of Expo 86 were set in motion, Vancouver had no modern, world-class sporting and convention centre and an outdated public transportation system. Yet preparations for Expo 86 took care of both of those shortcomings. In fact, Vancouver came out of Expo with more than a few convention centres, concert halls, and tourist attractions.

The 1986 exposition was largely held a 173-acre parcel of land on False Creek. Up until the late 1970s, the land, a former Canadian Pacific Railways yard, was little more than an industrial wasteland. In 1980, British Columbia Legislature passed the Transpo 86 Corporation Act, which set aside the land for development into an exposition site.

Originally, the fair was to be called Transpo 86, as it was always intend to have a transportation theme. When organizers realized the scope of their endeavour, and recognized the attention and interest it was drawing from countries across the world, it became clear that the event would, indeed, be a world's fair.

The official title of the fair was "Transportation and Communication: World in Motion." The theme was chosen to honour the city's role in connecting all major Canadian cities by rail, as well as Vancouver's status as a major port city and the role of communication in transportation.

The fair opened on May 2, 1986 and ran through to October 13, 1986. A total of 54 nations, nine provinces or territories, three states, and numerous corporations sponsored pavilions. By the time the event opened, the main expo site covered 165 acres, while the Canadian pavilion, not located on the main grounds, covered six acres.

Among some of the more memorable displays was Highway 86, a gigantic sculpture of a wavy highway, complete with nearly every vehicle imaginable. As well, UFO H20, a large UFO spouting water, was a hit with the kids. But more important to Vancouver was the construction of facilities and systems that would become of staple of our infrastructure and help facilitate our growth as a city.

BC Place—our resident 60,000-seat domed behemoth, opened in 1983 primarily as a home for the Canadian Football League Lions and the North American Soccer League Whitecaps—was put to good use for Expo's opening ceremonies. As well, the Plaza of Nations still hosts concerts today, while Science World has become a major interactive educational centre.

However, the most fundamental contribution that Expo helped bring to the city was the erection of the SkyTrain, an elevated rapid transit system that continues to be expanded. The SkyTrain connected the Expo grounds to the Canadian pavilion, Canada Place, which has become a major downtown convention centre complete with international cruise ship docks.

The international attention that Expo 86 garnered greatly surpassed anything that the organizers had hoped for. By the time the fair closed its doors, over 22-million visitors had passed through its gates. Despite expenditures of \$802 million and revenues of \$491 million (for a deficit of well over \$300 million), Expo 86 was considered a great success.

Many of Expo's attractions were auctioned off to buyers from around the world. Personally, I came across official "Expo 86" park benches while in Honolulu, Hawaii. The China Gate, originally part of the Chinese pavilion, was donated to the City of Vancouver, and now resides in Chinatown on Pender Street. The Monorail is now located



at Alton Towers Theme Park in England, while the much ballyhooed roller coaster, "The Scream Machine" is now the "Ninja" at Six Flags St. Louis. Among some of the more perplexing displays of spent money, the "World's Largest Flag Pole" now resides in Surrey, while the "World's Largest Ice Hockey Stick" is now in Duncan. And, of course, there was McDonald's floating restaurant, "McBarge," which was last seen rusting away peacefully in Burrard Inlet.

The Expo grounds themselves were sold to the Concord Pacific Development Corporation for a fraction of the original cost in a move that proved contentious and extremely controversial. Part of the reason for the outcry was that the grounds needed extensive work before Expo could be constructed, due to high levels of industrial waste.

For years, the Expo grounds sat unused. Today, however, the western two-thirds of the grounds have been developed into parks and high-rise condominiums in what many consider to be one of the most successful urban developments in Canadian history, while the eastern portion was used for Vancouver's Molson Indy race until it was cancelled in 2004.

Expo 86 remains, to date, the largest event ever hosted in British Columbia and is viewed by many as marking not only Vancouver's Centennial anniversary but our transition into a world-class city. Certainly, without Expo it would have been difficult to imagine Vancouver attracting major international summits, the attention of the American-focused Molson Indy and National Basketball Association, the FIFA Youth World Cup (the second largest world soccer tournament), or the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Expo 86 Facts & Figures

Official Theme: Transportation and Communication

Sub Theme: A Celebration of Ingenuity

Total Attendance: 22,111,578

Operating Dates: May 2 to October 13, 1986

Mascot: Expo Ernie (a life-sized robot)

Participating Nations: 54

Participating Provinces & Territories: 9

Participating US States: 3

Main Expo Site Size: 165 acres

Canadian Pavilion Size: 6 acres

Number of Royal Visitors: 4

Number of Musical Concerts: 36

Number of Comedians: 7

Word On The Street

Question: "Do you pay attention to the politics of the student union?"



A: "Not really...because I am very busy with my studies. I just don't feel like I have time and I know that I am only going to be here for two years, so it really doesn't make a huge difference. I know that might be kind of selfish, but that's how I feel."

— Stephanie Attridge



A: "No...because I am really busy with school. The vote was happening earlier this last month and I wanted to be a part of it, but since I'm so busy I couldn't take the time to research all the candidates. I didn't want to just randomly pick them."

— Angela Keay



A: "No, not really...I'm busy with school and I don't feel that they really have any affiliation with our program."

— Jessica Gregogski



A: "I can't say I do, no. It just doesn't affect me right now, but it really should, I think."

— Angela Hubert

Making "Dem" Look

First Douglas College pitcher to throw a no-hitter

Brian McLennon, OP Sports Editor

In only their third year since joining the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) conference, the Royals Baseball team is starting to turn heads around the league. At the end of the third week, the Royals sit in fifth position with a league record of 7-5 in the North division.

The Douglas College baseball program made history three years ago when they were the first Canadian college/university to compete in the sport of baseball in an American-based conference.

Well, on Saturday, April 15, Royals pitcher Dirk Dembroski made history again as he was the first Douglas College pitcher to throw a no-hitter during NWAACC league play. In an impressive 14-0 victory over Shoreline Community College, Dembroski proved that his off-season training regiment was well worth the work.

"I was very determined in the off-season and did a lot of weight training to build up my strength to prepare for this year," said Dembroski. "Last year, as a rookie, I had to pay my dues and all the opportunities weren't there for me to show what I can do. Now, in my second year, I have been given a huge opportunity to show what I can bring."

When asked about his history-making performance, he credits a lot of the praise to his teammates, especially the infielders.

"The infielders did an excellent job. I was able to force a lot of grounders, which they converted into outs. I'm happy about the team's performance, but it doesn't change our objective."

In only his second year, the "finesse" pitcher from South Delta Secondary has made the most of his opportunities. With the Royals ace pitcher Scot Rhynold from Prince George ruled as ineligible due a technicality, Dembroski has moved into the spotlight and has shone brightly.

This past summer, he was offered a chance to travel

with Thompson River University (TRU) to the U21 Nationals, and he seized the opportunity. Under the bright lights of the Nationals, Dembroski was able to catch the attention of some NCAA Division II schools in Florida, namely University of Central Florida and the University of Northern Florida.

"I have family in Florida, so it would be nice to be able to play down there."

Regardless of the individual attention, Dembroski remains grounded and focused on this season.

He attributes the attitude and dedication of all the players in making a huge difference in the team's turn around. "Everyone is setting the tone, whether it's stretching out before practice and games or staying late to get some extra batting practice, every player is focused on what it is that we have to do."

With the only five returning players, the chemistry amongst the players is very good. "We have a lot of fun on the road, but once it is game time...it's all business," Dembroski said.

"A lot of it has to do with new Assistant Coach, Greg Merritt. He has brought a lot of intensity and [a] hard work ethic to practice."

Even though the future seems bright for Dembroski, he hasn't lost a sense of where he is from.

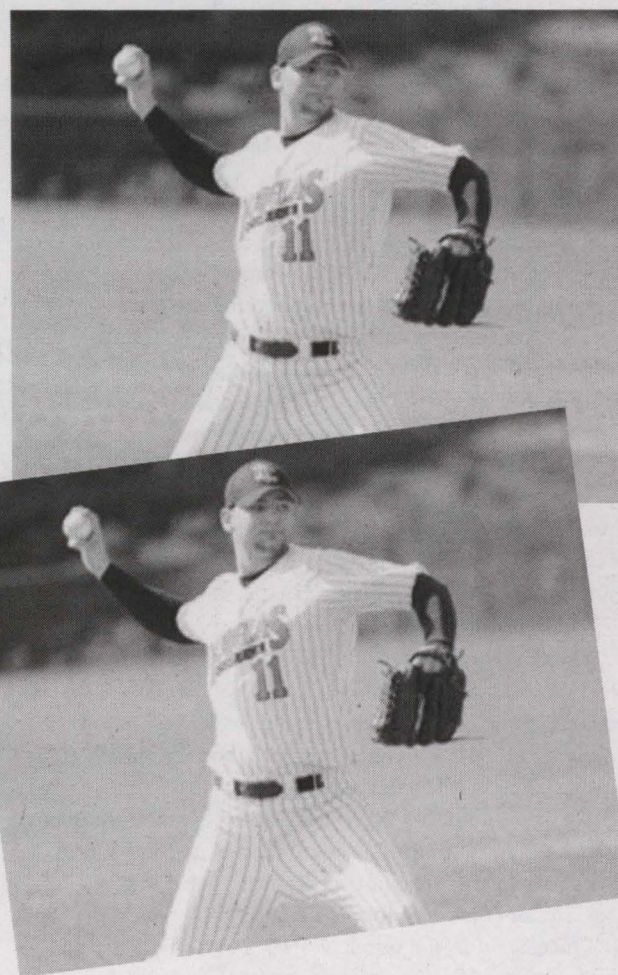
"I grew up in a small town and played 'small ball' for many years. Coming to Douglas has given me an opportunity to play in a competitive league like NWAAC with and against some great players."

Despite the possibilities of future travels and scholarship offers, Dembroski finds the time to give back to community.

"There have been a lot of kids coming out to watch our games. One in particular is a 12-year-old pitcher who is playing small ball like I did. So, I'm speaking with him and his parents and given them pointers. Hopefully he too can develop his game and get into a competitive league."

Despite a disappointing loss against Olympic on April 22, the Royals are still focused on placing in the top three of the North Division, which would offer them an opportunity to compete in post-season play.

"Our goal is to make [the] top three. Everything else is just something that happens along the way."



Royals' Athletes Shine

Douglas College celebrates with annual Athletic Banquet

Brian McLennon, OP Sports Editor

The 2006 Annual Douglas College Athletic Awards Banquet was held Thursday, March 30 at the Executive Inn Plaza in Coquitlam. The special night recognizes the hard work and dedication that is invested into Douglas College sporting programs by student-athletes, coaches, and Douglas College staff throughout the year.

This year's Master of Ceremony was former Douglas College Rugby player and coach, Michael Collins and the guest speaker for the evening was former Douglas College Assistant Coach for Rugby, Pam Hadikin.

The awards ceremony began with a special presentation to 2005 CCAA National Soccer Champions, the Men's Soccer team. On hand to present the awards were Susan Witter (President of Douglas College), and Blaine Jensen

(VP of Educational Services).

Other teams recognized for their outstanding achievements in the 2005-2006 season were the Badminton team who captured three CCAA National titles (Women's Singles, Women's Doubles, and Mixed Doubles) and the Women's Volleyball team, who were the recipients of the Douglas College Academic Team of the Year.

Notable Awards

Academic Team of the Year: Women's Volleyball
Male Athlete of the Year: Cameron Wilson (Men's Soccer)

Female Athlete of the Year: Lyndsay Thomson (Badminton)

Coach of the Year: Al Mawani (Badminton)

Andy and Helen Andrews Academic Athletes of the Year: Jodi Blasco (Women's Volleyball) and James Anderson (Men's Basketball)

Chris Johnson Award: Blake Douglas (Men's Soccer)

Peter Kerr Award: Mohammed Ali (Men's Soccer)

Jesse Penner Award: Matt McKay (Baseball)

Little League Award: Daniel Boudreau and David Dick (Baseball)

Gord Ellis Award: Dirk Dembroski and Scott Tulloch (Baseball)

Royals Rugby Chase Double Gold

Premier and Div II in Provincial Championships

David Pearcey, OP Contributor

Premier Women's Provincial Semi-final: Douglas 24 Capilano 5

Douglas came into this game after another two-week lay-off, and their track record was not good considering the circumstances.

Capilano would be missing a couple of key players, both heading off to represent Canada on a tour in preparation for the 2006 World Cup.

Douglas was true to form, as after an initial flurry of aggression, they were on their heels for most of the first half. Penalties, errant passes, and knock-ons made it very difficult for the home team to generate any offense.

Capilano carried the play with good ball retention, strategic kicking, and the desire to use the maul to their advantage.

This strategy was successful in the first half and led to a long break by fullback Darcy Patterson. After penetrating close to the tryline, the Capilano forwards took over and drove in, with MJ Smortchevsky scoring the try.

Douglas finally managed to penetrate the Capilano side of the field and a penalty awarded at the 30-metre line resulted in a successful penalty by Reanne Galuska (3-5). Capilano had a chance for 3 just before the half, but the kick was wide.

Obviously, words were said in the Douglas huddle at the break. The team did have a scare to start the half, as they lost the ruck on the kick-off and Capilano worked this into another kick at goal...wide again. A sigh of relief could be heard from the mostly partisan home crowd.

Douglas then managed to move downfield and they were awarded a penalty about 35-metres out. It was quickly taken, and the ball found its way out to second rower, Alicia Noger. After a penetrating run, she dished off to her partner at lock, Michelle Monchamp.

Using all the tricks in her repertoire, Monchamp managed to weave and deke through the defense and score almost under the posts...a second rowers dream.

Galuska converted to put Douglas up by five.

Once again in the Capilano end, a clearing kick was blocked and centre Tanya Leigh picked up the ball and barreled over the line, only to knock-on as she attempted to touch down. Off the ensuing five-metre scrum, the Douglas defense smothered Cap-scrumhalf Aidan McKinnon and the ball was turned over. The ball was fed to winger Jennifer Kluth, who managed to touch down after being tackled neck-high by her opponent. The referee saw fit to award a try directly under the posts because of the infraction.

After another conversion by Galuska the score stood at 17-5.

Capilano fought back and used their mauling skills to get within metres of the Douglas try-line, but turnovers and penalties now went against them and thwarted their attempts to get back into the game.

Douglas ended the suspense when flyhalf Stevi Schnoor broke a tackle and scored from 20-metres out. Galuska was perfect on the day with another two-point conversion.

Douglas now plays for the championship next Saturday, April 29 at 11:30am at Thunderbird Stadium at UBC.



Richmond Routed Div. II Team heads to Provincials

Second Division Womens' Semi-Final: Douglas 40 Richmond 0

This game was played on a long field under very warm conditions, and the bigger and older Douglas forwards met the challenge as they battered their smaller and younger opponents all game long.

Richmond showed some pace in the backs, but more often than not they could not get clean, quick ball to them.

Several times in the first half, Douglas was knocking on the door, but Richmond kept turning them back. The home side did score first after a quick tap penalty from about 30-metres out. The ball passed through the hands of several forwards before Hailey Archer bulled her way close to the try-line. As she went down in the tackle, she fed scrumhalf Amy Grant for the score. The convert was missed.

At the halftime whistle, Douglas had a penalty about 25-metres out. Kicker Kelly Peterson was just wide, but that would be her last miss on the day.

Douglas made two substitutions at the half. With only 15 players, Richmond had to weather the storm...and a storm it was.

The Douglas forwards continued to dominate, both in the loose and the scrums. After some good running from the backs, Douglas ran a penalty in from 8-metres out. The ball was sent from sideline to sideline for winger Sarah Duncan to score in the corner. Peterson made a precise kick from a difficult position to extend the Douglas lead to 12-0.

After the forwards drove down to the line again, it was Duncan on the spot to score her second try. Peterson again converted.

Another combination of phases by the forwards saw Nicole Lyons score, once again converted.

An instant replay saw fullback Nikki Jackman reap the benefits of her forwards' fine play...Peterson again was automatic on the ensuing kick.

Fittingly, it was Peterson herself who saw an opening and scampered 35 metres for the last try of the game. Another difficult kick resulted in another two points.

Next Saturday, the seconds will play for the title against either Ridge Meadows or Abbotsford at UBC, time TBA.

Royals Represent on National teams

Douglas College's Tim Frick leads national program for the 17th year

Teddy Johnson, OP Contributor

The 2006 Team Canada Women's Gold Cup wheelchair basketball team was named Saturday in Richmond, BC, featuring a number of significant changes.

Heading up the team that will represent Canada and the Canadian Wheelchair Basketball Association at the Gold Cup World Championships in Amsterdam, Netherlands July 5-16 are world champion and Paralympic gold medalists Jennifer "Goose" Krempien, Arley McNeney, MJ Boudreault, and Misty Thomas.

One of the newest members to join the women's team is Vancouver's Misty Thomas who has become the only female basketball player to play on Canada's national team for both the wheelchair and stand-up versions of basketball. Misty represented Canada as an Olympian and at the international level for many years in stand-up basketball before, during, and after earning a full scholarship to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). After suffering a series of knee injuries that resulted in a multitude of surgeries and ultimately a career-ending scenario, Thomas was able to satisfy her basketball "jones" by playing wheelchair basketball.

"She brings a lot experience, intensity, and talent to our program," said Head Coach, Tim Frick.

Frick who is Sport Science Instructor at Douglas College, is from Port Coquitlam and will head up the squad for the 17th year. He will be joined by veteran coaches Trish Nicholson of Richmond, Bill Johnson of Winnipeg, former UBC Men's Head Coach Bruce Enns, and Douglas College Sport Science Instructor and Sport Psychologist, Laura Farres of Vancouver.

Thomas, Krempien, McNeney, and Boudreault are just a handful of Douglas athletes that will be representing Canada in this summer's Gold Cup in Amsterdam.

"It's very interesting because many of the students at Douglas have no idea that many of these athletes have represented Canada in the past two Paralympics in Athens and Sydney and are Gold medalists," said Brian McLennon, who played for Team Canada in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA) this past year in the US.

"On the Men's National team, both Richard Peter and Jaimie Borisoff were named to this year's senior men's team. Other players who have either played or had stints with the National team programs are Marni "Moose" Peter [Nee: Abbott], Ken Hall, Bo Hedges, Ross MacDonald, and Sunny "Delight" Samarkoon, who represented Canada at last year's World Junior Championships and attended Douglas College this year."



Titan

Liam Chancey, OP Contributor

"I want to see God."

She could feel Chordo's stare burrowing into the back of her head. She imagined puzzlement and bewilderment on his face. She imagined a kind of horror.

"Don't joke about stuff like that." He pressed a few buttons on the power station. It thrummed to life, pouring energy into her body. "Just don't do it, Alta," he repeated. "Someone might take you seriously."

She smiled faintly, the motors in her face whirring almost inaudibly. Only at times like this, in the recharge zones, did she hear them. There was nobody else around them. Not even the Cherubim watchers floated around in the air, observing and recording everything that happened. They were alone, for now. It was these rare moments of solitude that Alta savoured.

"I'm not joking."

Thick power conduits ran along the walls and ceiling, hidden behind ribbed steel that had become dark and grimy from the air. The floor was scuffed, even caved in at parts, from the endless stream of bodies looking to charge their batteries up.

Power stations were lined up in rows spreading out in all directions. They extended for at least a dozen metres around, ending at the blackened walls that hid the rest of the city from the two within.

A quick surge sent shivers up her spine, and Chordo quickly apologized, readjusting the power flow subtly.

"What do you mean, then, seeing God?" His voice was almost too low for her to hear, even with the machinery in her ears. "Nobody even goes close to the Titan. Well, nobody except for the Powers, that is."

"Don't you think that's strange, though?" She wanted to turn around and look at him, but the power cables were stiff, and kept her body from moving. Desperately, she tried to crane her neck over her shoulder, but could only see one side of his face. "Haven't you ever wondered what goes on in there? Don't you..."

"We are told."

Alta snorted, and raised her hand, running it through her hair. Her fingers were still shiny, so metallic, from her last visit to the body shop. They almost glowed in the light. "Yeah, but that's one thing. They could be hiding anything in there, and we wouldn't ever know."

Chordo moved into her view, and she smiled faintly at him. He said, "I'm happy enough living out my life like this. I don't need to mess it up with any of your crazy ideas."

She frowned, and bit her lip. Metal on metal, a soft grating. "Fine," she murmured, her head dropping away, lowering her gaze to the floor. "Don't even try to humour me."

His hand came to rest on her shoulder, squeezed, released. "You are joking, aren't you?"

Her eyes sharpened and she paused, briefly thinking. "Yeah," she offered with a quick mock-laugh, "just spewing nonsense."

Chordo laughed in response, and ran his hand through her hair. "That's what I thought."

The power station detached from her, and they switched places. She admired Chordo's designer body, so smooth and fitted, so fluid and graceful. Like a fine blade. Bodies like

that were impossible for almost anyone to get. He knew people, important people in the City. Not that he ever spoke of it.

She pressed a few keys on the power station, and the thick tentacle of the cable wormed its way into his back. He tensed slightly, his body straightening, as it aligned with his power-core.

"Is there..."

Alta's voice was cut off as others began streaming in. A brilliant phalanx of people. Men and women and children, all weaving in, metal feet stomping on the battered floor, went to the power stations. Within moments, all of them were active. The collective noise made conversation impossible.

Alta frowned to herself. There was more to say. There was always more.

They walked slowly through the city, Alta's eyes turning towards everything, watching all with an odd voyeurism.

The buildings leaned together, built too close, the planning too poor to accommodate so many people. Windows faced windows, doors opened into doors, stairways crashed against each other. Mass movement was impossible. And it wasn't just here: She had been everywhere in the city and they all looked the same.

Tightly crammed together, millions upon millions, living in squalor.

Smoke snaked its way through the city day and night, churned out from the factories at the centre of each part of the city. Churned out from the Titan in more quantities than could ever be believed.

Light was muted behind the indelible haze that hugged the homes and windows and everything so completely that it was impossible to see for much further than a mile. Except if one looked skyward.

It was always day. Always clear. Not a single cloud to be seen from one stretch of the horizon to another. The sun moved rapidly around, coming into view then disappearing every few hours. But that was because the city was rotating, not the sun.

Alta had memorized the layout. Nodes building off of nodes, branching in every direction. They all grew out of the thick central ring that orbited the Titan.

Titan, the house of God.

Chordo pointed towards the black steel construct. It was an enormous statue, so tall that, even in the ever-clear day, they couldn't see the head, only up to the massive, bulbous knees. "There, you've seen God."

Her eyes turned towards him. She glared. "You know what I mean."

"That's all there is to see. The Titan is God."

Alta stopped suddenly and crossed her arms over her chest. "More propaganda."

He turned towards her as an indignant look covered his face. "There's nothing else to it. Just that, big and black and spoiled. God doesn't exist if he lets something like that happen to his home."

Her eyes flitted away from him, towards the distant view of the Titan. "Wasn't it always like that?"

"It's silver."

Alta turned back to him, then slowly her eyes dropped back to the ground at her feet. "Oh."



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